[English]

Conversion of Cochin Port

2920. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to convert the Cochin Port into a container transhipment port;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and total estimated cost involved;

(c) whether any other Port also is proposed to be converted into a container transhipment Port; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b). Cochin and Tuticorin Ports have been requested to undertake feasibility studies for construction of modern container terminals, which can also be used as transhipment ports.

(c) and (d). There is no other proposal.

Death of Haj Pilgrims

2921. SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of Haj pilgrims who died during the pilgrimage during the last three years;

(b) whether the dead bodies were handed over to the next of kin or relatives or were disposed of by the authorities themselves and the details thereof; and

(c) whether any help, monetary of otherwise, was provided by our Consulate, Haj Committee and our other officials and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) The total number of Indian Haj pilgrims who died during the pilgrimage in the last three years is as follows:

Haj	-	1994	:	80
Haj	-	1995	:	79
Haj	-	1996	:	120

(b) It has invariably been the practice for deceased Indian pilgrims to be buried in Makkah/Madina in the presence of their relations or acquaintances accompanying them during the Haj pilgrimage. There has been no case of a request being made for transportation of a dead body to India in case of death during the holy pilgrimage.

(c) All expenses on account of burials during the pilgrimage are met by the Haj authorities in Saudi Arabia. The Consulate General of India renders assistance as necessary, informs the next of kin in India, issues the death certificate, retrieves the belongings of the deceased and arranges to send them to India, expenses on which are borne by the Central Haj Committee. Refund of one way pilgrim air fare is made by the Central Haj Committee.

Delay in Berthing the Oil Tankers

2922. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "port dalays, confusion, dearer petroleum" appearing in the 'The Hindu Business Line', New Delhi dated 9th July, 1996;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein as per his Ministry's information;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(d) the measures being taken to eliminate chronic delays in berthing the oil tankers at Indian Ports and payment of huge demurrage and hiked transportation charged/caused by the sheer lack of planning?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (d). The information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the House.

Development of Navigation

2923. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether any inland (river) navigation has been developed in the country during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether, there are any prospects of developing inland navigation on the Narmada river in the coming years; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b). Yes, Sir. During the last three years, developmental activites have been carried out on three National Waterways viz. Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River System, River Brahmaputra and West Coast Canal. Fairway has been provided alongwith cannel marking pilotage and terminal facilities on these waterways.

(c) and (d). Two studies have been carried out on the navigational potentional of the stretch from Hoshangabad to the Sea (640 kms) in river Narmada. Navigation will have to be studied again after construction of four major dams viz. Sardar Sarovar Dam, Maheshwar Dam, Omareshwar Dam and Narmada Sagar Dam is complete. Besides, Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal has also not allocated any water for navigation downstream of Sardar Sarovar Dam. Therefore, at presently, the navigational potential of river Narmada is not established.